Research Fortnight

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Research and technology policy in Britain and Europe • Founded by William Bown • Vol.6 No.20ss. Wed 23 August 2000

Switch to formula for third stream funding

• Permanent status of new funds to trigger change of tack

THE GOVERNMENT'S PROMISE of a "permanent third stream" of business-related funding for universities may trigger the creation of a new formula for allocating the money based on an upcoming survey of existing activity, it emerged this week.

Last month's white paper on science and innovation pledged £80 million of new money to the third stream, which aims to promote technology transfer and other links between universities and local businesses. The new money will come from the Office of Science and Technology over the next three years via a new Higher Education Innovation Fund *[last issue]*.

Unlike previous initiatives in the area, such as the HEROBC scheme run by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the new money is not time-limited but intended to become a permanent feature of funding for universities. As a result, the nature of the funding mechanism is likely to change.

HEROBC was project-based, responded to universities' own priorities and focused on infrastructure issues such as cultural change in academia and setting up gateways for businesses. By contrast, the new arrangements may be formula-driven, based on generic objectives and rely on measurable contributions to the local economy, said HEFCE this week.

Adrian Hill, the HEFCE official leading work on the third stream, said he would be surprised if the permanency of the new arrangements did not lead to some sort of formula emerging for allocating the funding in future. The basis for that could be a generic batch of 5-10 measurable outputs where universities would need to demonstrate progress. That in turn could take its lead from a benchmarking survey, promised in the white paper, that aims to establish the UK's performance in university-business interaction.

"We could be looking for quite explicit outputs of deliverables which visibly benefit the economy," said Hill this week. This could encompass a wide variety of knowledge transfer activities, including, for example, work with the voluntary sector.

HEFCE itself is considering the immediate future of HEROBC-type activity. It could remain effectively distinct from OST-funded activity, albeit under the same banner of the HEIF. Higher education funding authorities in the rest of the UK, each of which already has its own outreach scheme, face the same choice in coming months.

Whether or not HEROBC itself continues, HEFCE will retain a mission for its funds that will be distinct from the OST's. While HEFCE will be looking to fund a range of activities that extend into "softer" community-related knowledge transfer encompassing even fine arts-based colleges, the OST seems set to aim in the opposite direction with a focus on "hard" high technology outputs. Administered together by HEFCE, the two elements of third stream funding look likely to encompass a broad sweep of objectives.

Meanwhile, there is increasing evidence of fusion between the community outreach work of universities and the knowledge transfer work of regional development authorities. Regional consortia of universities are developing permanent secretariats of one or two people, sometimes co-located at the HQ of the local regional development authority. And the last round of HEROBC allocations, announced earlier this month, saw the first example of a winning bid from a consortium involving every university in the region (from the South West).

• Major programmes of stem cell research in the UK came a step closer to reality on 16 August when the government backed a report recommending extensions to the range of permitted research on human tissue. The report from the government's chief medical officer specified treatment of human disease and therapeutic cloning as two areas where research on early embryos should be allowed. Although ministers backed the report, Lords and MPs will be given a free vote later this year. The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council welcomed the move.

EVERY NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR RESEARCH FUNDING. EVERY DISCIPLINE. EVERY FORTNIGHT

Research Fortnight

Research Fortnight provides news, analysis and comment on research policy in the UK and Europe. It aims to speed the flow of information and ideas between business, research agencies, universities, government and capital.

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Published by Compass CBA Business Publishing Ltd.

© Compass CBA Business Publishing Ltd, UK 2000.
ISSN 1358-1198.

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Published fortnightly. Annual subscription £495, £445 for academics. *(Only staff in institutions funded by HEFCE, SHEFC, HEFCW or DENI)*
For further subscription information, see the back page.

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DfEE ICT research centre

The Department for Education and Employment is inviting expressions of interest to set up a research centre to develop a better evidence base and analytical capacity concerning the application of information and communications technology in the fields of education and employment.

The objective of the centre will be to form an expert body in the development, review and use of ICT research in the UK. The research centre will review findings from a range of sources, conduct empirical work and develop both conceptual frameworks and innovative research methods.

Research Funding Guide: p50

Contact: DfEE Head Office, Room W601, Moorfoot, Sheffield, S1 4PQ. Tel 0114 259 3908. Fax 0114 259 3858.

No Deadline [1]

Social research for the DSS

The Department of Social Security has launched a call for expressions of interest to tender for projects under its research programme 2000/01. Areas of research are:

1. CHILDREN, POVERTY

- dynamics of poverty and low income;
- comparative study of child poverty and integrated tax and benefit systems;
- the dynamics of children's lives in lone parent families;
- survey of low income families with children-development work for the third sweep.

2. PENSIONERS, OLDER PEOPLE

- older people's views and perceptions of service delivery;
- profile of future pensioners.

3. PEOPLE OF WORKING AGE

- lone parents in London;
- evaluation of the effects of benefit sanctions on community sentences;
- secondary analysis of job seeker's allowance claimant survey/leaving incapacity benefit survey;
- flows between job seeker's allowance and incapacity benefit;
- review of rehabilitation services available to disability and incapacity benefit recipients;
- evaluation of the capability report
- evaluation of the set-up and operation of the HB/CTB verification Framework - phase two;
- evaluation of the under-occupation pilot;
- local area analyses;
- housing benefit and the appeals service;
- implementing the transitional housing benefit scheme;
- research to support the move to automated credit transfer.

Research Funding Guide: p62

Contact: Keith Watson, Social Research Branch, DSS, Room 426, The Adelphi, 1-11 John Adam Street, London, WC2N 6HT. Tel 020 7962 8557. Email K.Watson@ms42.dss.gsi.gov.uk. Web http://www.dss.gov.uk/asd/asd5.

No deadline [2]

Wellcome biodiversity

The Wellcome Trust is inviting applications for senior and junior research fellowships, and research training studentships under its biodiversity programme. The initiative aims to strengthen studies in taxonomy, systematics, speciation and evolutionary biology, including the genetic analysis of population structure by providing opportunities for training and career development. The scheme focuses on research relevant to infectious diseases of man and domesticated animals, and funding may be provided for studies of the genetic diversity of pathogens and the vectors of these pathogens. Applications in the field of medical and veterinary entomology are particularly encouraged.

Research Funding Guide: p276

Contact: Grants Section (Biodiversity), Wellcome Trust, 183 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE. Fax 020 7611 8352. Email k.findlay@wellcome.ac.uk. Web http://www.wellcome.ac.uk.

Deadline: Preliminary applications 1 September 2000; full applications by 23 October 2000. [3]

Children's health

Glaxo Wellcome and Barnardo's have jointly issued a call to tender for two research projects under the Right Fit initiative to improve the health of children and young people: an overall evaluation of the Right Fit initiative and its impact on the health behaviours of children and young people; the impact of partnerships on the effective delivery of the initiative and to draw out transferable lessons.

A budget of £50,000 is available for each commission.

Research Funding Guide: p298

Contact: Elizabeth Ebose, Tel 020 8498 7393. Email elizabeth.ebose@barnardos.org.uk. Web http://www.barnardos.org.uk.

Deadline: 18 September 2000 [5]

Construction

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions invites research proposals under its new horizons programme which address issues of sustainable development including transport.

The research proposed should help identify and meet social, environmental and economic challenges, and develop innovative cross-cutting approaches which will assist the DETR in meeting its objectives. Priority will be given to proposals in the following areas:

- Sustainable development: benchmarking and measuring sustainability in the built environment;
- Transport: understanding choice, particularly in relation to location decisions and related travel decisions;
- Research methods: use of advanced methodologies in social and environmental sciences to better inform, and undertake, relevant research;
- Participation: techniques for engaging all sectors of society in dialogue about DETR policies;

or which address the following issues:

- Health: secondary impacts of DETR policies;
- Crime: potential effects of DETR policies;
- Population: demographic change and its impact on DETR policies.

Any established research organisation is eligible to apply and the involvement of small and medium sized enterprises is encouraged. Projects are not normally expected to exceed £50,000 or to take longer than 12 months. The DETR expects to fund about six projects in response to this call.

Research Funding Guide: p56

Contact: Ian Hawthorn, Programme Manager, DETR, STP Division, 4/24 Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DR. Tel 020 7944 5033. Email ian_hawthorne@detr.gsi.gov.uk. Web http:// research.detr.gov.uk/horizons/horizons.htm.

Deadline: 26 September 2000 [6]

Heart research

The National Heart Research Fund is inviting applications for its annual research grants. The aim of the scheme is to support and promote medical research into heart disease and related disorders, treatments and cures of such complaints and the dissemination of useful results.

Research Funding Guide: p228

Contact: David Marriott, National Heart Research Fund, Concord House, Park Lane, Leeds LS3 1EQ.

Deadlines: 30 September 2000 [7]

RS conference grants

Applications are invited under the Royal Society conference grants scheme for travel and subsistence grants to enable UK academics to participate in scientific conferences overseas. Applicants should be of at least PhD status, working in the natural sciences and ordinarily resident in the UK. These grants are not available to those scientists employed by the research councils, government bodies, the National Health Service, state aided research establishments or industrial or commercial bodies.

Research Funding Guide: p254

Contact: Sandra Goodall, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AG. Email conference.grants@royalsoc.ac.uk. Web http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk.

Deadline: 1 October 2000 [8]

DoH cancer network

The Department of Health has launched a call to tender for the contract to provide the co-ordinating centre for the new NHS cancer research network. The NCRN will be a managed research network mapping onto NHS service networks for cancer care in England. All cancer service networks will be eligible to become research networks for the NCRN. The NCRN co-ordinating centre will assist the DoH in creating the NCRN and will manage the NCRN on an ongoing basis. The NCRN will have direct impact on the quality of cancer care by integrating research and cancer care.

Research Funding Guide: p60

Contact: Sara Fewell, R&D Directorate, NHS Executive South West, DoH, Westward House, Lime Kiln Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, BS34 8SR. Tel 0117 9841777. Fax 0117 9841776. Email sara.fewell@doh.gsi.gov.uk.

2 October 2000 at 1pm. [9]

Small particle physics

The Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council is inviting applications for its small awards scheme. Encouraged are applications for projects relevant to publicising or teaching PPARC-funded science areas, ie particle physics; space, ionospheric, solar and planetary science; astronomy; astrophysics and cosmology. Awards can range from £250 to £10,000. Encouragement is given to projects involving young people and schools.

Research Funding Guide: p106

Contact: PUST Office, PPARC, Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1SZ. Tel 01793 442123. Fax 01793 442002. Email pr_pus@pparc.ac.uk.

Deadline: 10 October 2000 [10]

BBSRC small grants

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council announces its small grants scheme which is available exclusively to scientists and postgraduate students funded by the BBSRC and those working in a BBSRC-sponsored institute. Grants of up to £2000 will be available.

Research Funding Guide: p36

Contact: Monica Winstanley or Natasha Martineau, BBSRC Public Affairs Branch, BBSRC, Polaris House, Swindon, SN2 1UH. Tel 01793 413204 or 413301. Web http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/opennet/pa/scien/nswaward.html.

Deadline: 13 October 2000 [11]

Patient-centred services

The NHS Executive Trent has issued a call for proposals for multidisciplinary research around the theme of innovative delivery of patient/client-centred care across organisational and sector boundaries. The programme aims to demonstrate how partnerships promote delivery of patient/client centred services and to evaluate the application of evidence-based change in service delivery in order to demonstrate measurable gain for patients/clients. Proposals should target one or both of these aims and they must involve at least two agencies which deliver care to a patient group or two or more sectors within the NHS delivering care to a patient group.

Priority areas are: mental health, cancer, cardiovascular disease and stroke, delivery of children's services and the delivery of the care and rehabilitation of older people. The total funding will be up to £300,000 per year for up to two years. It is anticipated that at least six projects will be funded.

Research Funding Guide: p103

Contact: NHS Executive Trent, Fulwood House, Old Fulwood Road, Sheffield, S10 3TH. Fax 0114 282 0396. Email Karen.beck@doh.gsi.gov.uk. Web http://www.nhsetrent.gov.uk/trentrd/rd.html.

Deadline: 15 October 2000 [12]

AHRB leave scheme

The Arts and Humanities Research Board is inviting applications for its research leave scheme in the arts and humanities. The scheme supports research conducted by individual scholars across all areas of the arts and humanities. It provides awards to relieve scholars of teaching and administrative responsibilities in order to bring a research project to completion and it supports the completion and dis-

semination of work that will lead to significant advances in knowledge, understanding or insights.

The scheme is open to members of the academic staff of higher education institutions directly funded by the UK funding councils. Awards can be for three or four months.

Research Funding Guide: p35

Contact: Northavon House, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol, BS16 1QD. Tel 0117 931 7417. Fax 0117 931 7157.

Deadline: 31 October 2000 [14]

AHRB small grants

The Arts and Humanities Research Board is inviting applications for its small grants in the creative and performing arts. The scheme provides awards of up to £5,000. The aims of the scheme are: to support research activity of the highest quality conducted by individual scholars across all areas of the creative and performing arts; to enable individual scholars to pursue well-defined small-scale projects, or parts of longer projects, that are likely to bring advances in knowledge, understanding or insight; and, where appropriate, to support the preparation of research for public output.

The scheme is open to members of academic staff of higher education institutions funded by UK funding councils.

Research Funding Guide: p35

Contact: Northavon House, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol, BS16 1QD. Tel 0117 931 7417. Fax 0117 931 7157.

Deadline: 31 October 2000 [15]

Fyssen prize

The Fyssen Foundation invites nominations for its annual international prize of 200,000FF (£18,500) for a scientist who has conducted research into cognitive mechanisms The topic for the 2000 prize is intentionality and planning of action.

Research Funding Guide

Contact: Secretariat, Fondation Fyssen, 194 Rue de Rivoli, 75001 Paris, France. Tel +33 142975316. Fax +33 142601795. Web http://www.fondation-fyssen.org/bienvenue.html.

Deadline: 31 October 2000 [16]

Public understanding

The Royal Society is seeking applications for its COPUS grants in support of public understanding of science, engineering and technology. There are three types of COPUS grants: a seed grant to pump prime activities on a local scale; a development grant to support larger scale initiatives; and a National Science Week grant for activities intended for the annual national Science Week.

Research Funding Guide: p254

Contact: Anna Link, RS, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AG. Tel 020 7451 2581. Fax 020 7930 2170. Email anna.link@royalsoc.ac.uk.

Deadline: 31 October 2000 [17]

Public awareness

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council is inviting applications from scientists and postgraduate students funded by the BBSRC and those working in a BBSRC-sponsored institute for its grant scheme for developing resources and activities to enhance public access to science.

This scheme provides grants, each up to £10,000. Applications based around collaborations with community and special interest groups, and with science communicators are encouraged.

Research Funding Guide: p36

Contact: Monica Winstanley or Natasha Martineau of public affairs branch, BBSRC, Polaris House, Swindon, SN2 1UH. Tel 01793 413204 or 413301. Web http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/opennet/pa/scien/puswin.html.

Deadline: 30 November 2000 [18]

Parkinson's disease grants

The Parkinson's Disease Society is inviting applications for research grants of up to three years to undertake basic or applied medical research into Parkinson's Disease. Grants are tenable only in the UK. Particularly encouraged are applications for pilot grants needing funding for one year. Ref. MAP/00/02.

Research Funding Guide: p236

Contact: Research Department, Parkinson's Disease Society, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1V 1EJ. Email mperry@parkinsons.org.uk.

Deadline: 30 November 2000 [19]

Medical microbiology

The Wellcome Trust is calling for applications for research fellowships and research leave fellowships in medical microbiology. These are intended to strengthen research in all aspects in this area and by fostering relationships between clinicians and basic scientists. Proposals are particularly encouraged in the areas of: molecular and cellular mechanisms of pathogenesis; molecular epidemiology; molecular basis of antimicrobial resistance; molecular mechanisms of immunity to microbial infection; molecular vaccine science.

Research Funding Guide: p276

Contact: Louise Leong, The Grants Section, The Wellcome Trust, 183 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE. Fax 020 7611 8352. Email l.leong@wellcome.ac.uk.

Deadline: Preliminary proposals 10 November 2000; full applications 19 January 2001. [20]

British history visiting professorship

The Fulbright Commission is inviting applications for its visiting professorship in British History at Westminster College (Missouri) for 2001/02.

Applicants must be UK citizens or resident in the UK, hold a PhD and have at least one year's experience of lecturing to undergraduate students. Funding of up to $40,000 (£26,500) will be available.

Research Funding Guide: p178

Contact: British Programme Manager, Fulbright Commission, 62 Doughty Street, London, WC1N 2JZ. Web http://www.ftclondon.co.uk.

Deadline: 25 January 2001 [21]

MRC CORRECTION

An incorrect deadline was given in the 2 August edition of Research Fortnight for the Medical Research Council's clinical training fellowships (item 9.20/26). The correct deadline is 30 August 2000.

NEWS

MP's 'bizarre' anger: The House of Commons science and technology committee has dismissed the government's reply to its report on public research expenditure as "wholly inadequate". The MPs said in a statement this month that parts of the government's response were based on "a bizarre misinterpretation" of their views.

The MPs said the government had done little more than restate facts to which they had already drawn attention and had failed to give adequate reasons for rejecting their recommendations, made in a report in April.

The committee has urged the government to look again at their earlier recommendations and to reverse its decision to stop publishing the Forward Look digest of government-wide R&D expenditure plans every year.

Starlink bridge: The Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council has announced extra support next year for research groups that face a gap in their funding for work with the Starlink programme on satellite data. From the beginning of April 2001, PPARC will no longer provide money for Starlink computing resources from a separate fund. Instead, the money will be incorporated into a group's research grant. However, many research groups are due to have their grants renewed after the April deadline and this means a gap in funding for their Starlink services. PPARC has said that these research groups will be able to request money for hardware, consumables, maintenance costs and system manager effort to bridge the gap between April and their own grant renewal date. The closing date for applications to this fund is 1 October 2000.

AIRTO join-up call: The Association of Independent Research and Technology Organisations has called for the government to do more to increase the transfer of knowledge into industrial practice. AIRTO says industry demand for knowledge purchasing in the UK is weak and recommends measures to strengthen it. These include a five year programme to encourage SMEs to upgrade their manufacturing and business competencies and a "virtual network" bringing together supply chains, regional development agencies, industry and academia to exploit e-commerce.

At a meeting earlier this month, AIRTO also said it was unhappy with the government's approach to EU Framework programmes, calling for more emphasis on the industrial application of research results.

Plain sailing: The Natural Environment Research Council has announced that time aboard its research ships will now be "free" for successful science proposals. The move is hoped to reverse a dramatic decline in demand for ship time in recent years, blamed on the perceived high costs of ocean-going research proposals that take to the waves. Ship time will now be funded centrally to eliminate these costs. The next two years will decide the future size of the NERC fleet, with the research council counting how many high-quality applications are received.

Tax breaks guide: The Treasury has issued new guidelines to help businesses decide which activities qualify as R&D for tax purposes. The guidelines replace the old definition of "scientific research" and were drawn up by government departments to help SMEs work out more easily if they qualify for the 150 per cent tax relief on R&D spending announced in 1999.